

EVENT PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES 2025



CITY OF MELBOURNE

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The City of Melbourne respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we govern, the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung and Bunurong / Boon Wurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation and pays respect to their Elders past and present.

We acknowledge and honour the unbroken spiritual, cultural and political connection they have maintained to this unique place for more than 2000 generations.

We accept the invitation in the Uluru Statement from the Heart and are committed to walking together to build a better future.

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INTRODUCTION

The Event Partnership Program is designed to provide financial support to free and accessible events that are held within the City of Melbourne municipality.

The program aims to activate Melbourne and create memorable, engaging and innovative experiences for both locals and visitors.

Program objectives

There are several key Council objectives we are looking to achieve through this program which will form part of the assessment criteria, these include:

Melbourne's unique identity and place

Events that grow or enhance event offerings for Melbourne. Creating unique and positive experiences for visitors, events will celebrate Melbourne's unique, vibrant and creative city through marketing, engaging programming and event delivery.

Economy of the future

Events that drive economic impact, business engagement and visitation to the city, creating conditions for a strong, adaptive, sustainable and thriving future city economy. Events will reflect how they can best contribute to building an economy of the future through considered timings, locations and opportunities for alignment between the city and the event.

Access and affordability

Events which help make Melbourne an accessible and affordable city through offering programming that is accessible, inclusive, culturally aware and safe whilst engaging with community groups.



ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

To be eligible for the Event Partnership Program, the event must:

-  Be free to attend or have significant free programming.
-  Have a minimum of 5,000 attendees to the free programming element.
-  Start between 1 January – 31 December 2025.
-  Demonstrate that their sponsorship request equates to less than 70% of the overall expenditure of the free programming budget.
-  Have a valid Certificate of Currency for public liability insurance.
-  Occur within the [City of Melbourne municipality](#).

Applications will be ineligible if any of the following apply:

- The applicant is not a legal entity with an ABN.
- The applicant's ABN entity type is individual or sole trader.
- Events that offer paid entry tickets only or events that require a compulsory donation for entry.
- Industry or business events. eg conferences, tradeshows, congresses, symposiums etc.
- The event is an exhibition, PR opportunity, award ceremony, commercial theatre production or monthly recurring market.
- The event is a teaching program, lecture or university open day.
- The event is online only.
- Events that have an adverse effect on public health, safety, the environment or heritage.
- Events that denigrate or exclude any groups in the community.
- Events that sell or promote unethically sourced animal products.
- Events that exploit or use animals in harmful ways, for example, through exhibition or use in performances.
- Events or Festivals (including components thereof) that receive funding from another program.
- Organisations that have an outstanding debt to City of Melbourne or that have failed to comply with the terms and conditions of any previous funding agreement with City of Melbourne.
- The applicant undertakes canvassing or lobbying of Elected Members and / or employees of City of Melbourne in relation to the sponsorship request during the application and assessment period.
- The applicant is a City of Melbourne employee.

Ineligible applications will not advance to the assessment stage and applicants will be notified.



Types of sponsorships

Applicants can request cash and / or in-kind sponsorship. The total value of the sponsorship is calculated by combining the value of both cash and in-kind support.



Cash sponsorship

Cash sponsorship up to \$150,000 excluding GST is available per event.

The allocation of City of Melbourne cash sponsorship will be negotiated between both parties and specified in the sponsorship agreement. Cash sponsorship must be allocated towards the free programming of the event.



In-kind sponsorship

In-kind sponsorship relates to the partial or full waiver of event site hire fees for City of Melbourne's public outdoor spaces only.

Not for profit / community organisations will automatically have any applicable site hire fees waived, regardless of the outcome of their application. Commercial events will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

In-kind sponsorship excludes any costs associated with other City of Melbourne permits such as planning or food and health permits.








PARTNERSHIP TIERS

All events are categorised into tiers to ensure the application, assessment and subsequent sponsorship agreement is equitable and reflective of the level of investment. Tiers are categorised by the total investment value (cash and in-kind) and defined by the criteria below.

TIER 3 Funding request \$10,000 – \$50,000	TIER 2 Funding request \$50,001 - \$100,000	TIER 1 Funding request \$100,001+
Attendance	Attendance	Attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum 5,000 to free programming of event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum overall attendance of 50,000 Significant free programming attracting a minimum of 25,000 attendees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum overall attendance of 100,000 Significant free programming attracting a minimum of 50,000 attendees.
Event profile	Event profile	Event profile
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State and/or local exposure through marketing promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National exposure in addition to notable local exposure through marketing promotion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National and/or international exposure in addition to significant local exposure through extensive marketing promotion.
Sponsorship benefits	Sponsorship benefits	Sponsorship benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum \$2,500 in ticketing / corporate hospitality or equivalent (if applicable) Digital and print advertising Signage and branding opportunities Speaking opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum \$5,000 in ticketing / corporate hospitality Significant digital and print advertising Significant signage and branding opportunities Significant speaking opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum \$10,000 in ticketing / corporate hospitality Significant digital and print advertising Significant signage and branding opportunities Significant speaking opportunities.
Market research	Market research	Market research
Market research (externally or internally delivered) e.g. surveys.	Formal market research conducted by an external organisation, including at least one Economic Impact Report if a multi-year agreement.	Formal market research conducted by an external organisation, including at least one Economic Impact Report if a multi-year agreement.
Sustainability	Sustainability	Sustainability
<p>Collaborate on initiatives to identify ways in which you will minimise the environmental impact of your event including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide appropriate amount of bins Identify consumer single use plastics. 	<p>Collaborate on initiatives to identify ways in which you will minimise the environmental impact of your event including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete a waste audit of the event Identify consumer single use plastics. 	<p>Collaborate on initiatives to identify ways in which you will minimise the environmental impact of your event including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report on initiatives undertaken to reduce their carbon footprint Complete a waste audit of the event Identify consumer single use plastics.
Business engagement	Business engagement	Business engagement
Meaningful engagement with City of Melbourne businesses and local precinct associations.	Meaningful engagement with City of Melbourne businesses and local precinct associations.	Meaningful engagement with City of Melbourne businesses and local precinct associations.
Acquittal	Acquittal	Acquittal
Within 4 weeks of the event concluding, the applicant must provide an acquittal report.	Within 4 weeks of the event concluding, the applicant must provide an acquittal report.	Within 8 weeks of the event concluding, the applicant must provide an acquittal report.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA WEIGHTINGS

Applications will be assessed by the Event Partnership team using a set of weighted assessment criteria, and then reviewed by a panel of assessors from various divisions within City of Melbourne.

CRITERIA	CONSIDERATION	WEIGHTING
 Economic impact and attendance	The degree to which the event increases visitation to the city, engages local businesses and provides a measurable economic benefit to the city.	21%
 Event programming	The range of free and engaging programming that encourages active participation.	17%
 Brand and marketing	The extent to which the event increases the profile of the city as a tourist destination and provides sponsorship benefits to council.	16%
 Community involvement	The degree to which the event actively and meaningfully engages with community groups and collaborates with Traditional Owners. Accessibility for all members of the community is also a key consideration.	15%
 Event calendar alignment	The degree to which the event fits within city's calendar, delivering a year-round of events. Including: uniqueness, date, time and location.	13%
 Environmental sustainability	The degree to which the event employs environmentally sustainable practices and reduces their environmental impact.	10%
 Application standard	The degree to which the event is financially viable and sustainable with or without City of Melbourne funding. The level of detail and completeness of the information provided, as well as the demonstrated capacity of the organisation to deliver the event.	8%
TOTAL		100%

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS

The application form will ask questions that pertain to the following considerations.



Free programming

City of Melbourne supports engaging experiences that encourage attendees to actively participate as part of the event - therefore a detailed description of the various free programming elements is required.



Aboriginal Melbourne

An [Acknowledgment of Traditional Owners and / or a Welcome to Country](#), should be given at all events. This recognises that Victoria has a strong and proud Aboriginal history and complex ownership and land stewardship systems stretching back many thousands of years and it pays respect to the Traditional Owners.

View our [Aboriginal Melbourne](#) website for more information and to view City of Melbourne's Reconciliation Action Plan.



Community engagement

Events that City of Melbourne support must provide the opportunity for people to feel more connected and engaged with their community. A good application will outline:

- Any additional cultural programming that will involve Aboriginal history and culture;
- How many different community groups have been engaged in the planning and delivery of the event;
- How many different communities will attend the event; and
- How attendees can meaningfully engage with the various communities as part of the event experience.

Examples include:

- Engaging local sporting clubs to promote at the event / mascots for photo opportunities;
- Engaging local multicultural communities for dance workshops, language classes, choir performances; and
- Specific partnerships with key community groups.



Business engagement

City of Melbourne supports events that partner with businesses and help showcase Melbourne's unique shopping and dining precincts. A good application will outline:

- How your event will meaningfully engage with local [precinct associations](#), businesses and retailers as part of the event delivery;
- How your event will impact local businesses (ie. road closures, pedestrian movement impacts, will the businesses see increased activity etc.); and
- How your event will create direct economic impact for local businesses through incentive offers and / or marketing of local businesses as part of the event.



Sponsorship Benefits

The Event Partnership Program is a sponsorship program and not a grant, therefore there is an expectation that the application outlines a summary of bespoke sponsorship benefits on offer to City of Melbourne. These may include:

- Special events and money can't buy experiences for Council supported community groups;
- Activation opportunities for Council branches;
- Council message included on website and / or in event program;
- Councillor speaking opportunities;
- Tickets / invitations for associated events; and
- Digital and print advertising.

You are able upload a bespoke summary or detail this as part of the application form.



Event budget

All applications must include a balanced budget, where all costs are accurate and reasonable.

Income: Include all sources of income (confirmed and unconfirmed) required to fund the costs of the event such as:

- City of Melbourne sponsorship request;
- Other grants or sponsorship (government, philanthropic, private and corporate);
- Earned income (e.g. ticket sales); and
- In-kind support.

Expenditure: Include all expenses in the budget, highlighting where City of Melbourne sponsorship will be allocated. It is recommended that monetary support be allocated to marketing, PR and programming costs.

City of Melbourne will not support events where monetary support is allocated to core operational costs including accommodation, wages / staffing costs, travel, security, prizes / prize money, food and beverage costs etc.

Events must not be fully reliant on funding from City of Melbourne and must be able to demonstrate that their sponsorship request equates to less than 70% of the overall expenditure of the free programming budget.



Accessibility and inclusion

Accessibility is an important consideration for any event City of Melbourne may partner with, as such event organisers must consider accessibility as part of their planning and put measures in place to ensure that the event site is accessible to everyone.

As part of Council's commitment to accessibility, a [self-assessment checklist](#) has been developed to help businesses and event organisers to ensure equal access for people of all ages and abilities. This checklist can also be used as a guide when planning improvements or when selecting sites for festivals or events.

View our [Accessing Melbourne](#) website to view our interactive access map and for further information on accessibility in the city.

City of Melbourne commits to ensuring that everyone in the Melbourne municipality, regardless of their gender identity have access to equal power, resources and opportunities, and are treated with dignity, respect and fairness.

This Statement of Commitment establishes the expectation that gender equality is considered and prioritised in all current and future Council planning, policy, service delivery and practice.



Sustainability

All events must commit to reducing their environmental impact and improving waste management. In your application, please provide details of the events sustainable commitments as part of the event delivery, including:

- Encouraging the use of public transport to and from the event;
- Providing recycling facilities;
- Removal of [banned single-use plastics](#);
- Reducing printed collateral;
- Completing a waste audit report; and
- Establishing improvement targets.

Please find more information through the [Sustainable Event Guide](#).



Priority Considerations

The program prioritises events that promote visitation and tourism expenditure, events in the Docklands precinct and winter events. Events that activate the city during daytime and twilight hours will also be highly considered.

Visitation and spend

Tourism expenditure generated by an event will be a key metric in measuring the value added to the Melbourne economy, as a result of tourism activities generated by a funded event.

Docklands

Docklands is a priority precinct for City of Melbourne and the program is actively looking to attract eligible events to Docklands. Preference will be given to events that offer benefits to Docklands' workers, residents, and local businesses. Events that will attract significant new audiences to the area are also encouraged to apply for sponsorship.

Winter events

Winter is a priority season to activate in Melbourne, and the program is actively looking to attract eligible events staged during this traditionally quieter time on the event calendar.

Day-time and twilight activation

Keeping Melbourne city vibrant at all times of the day is a priority. Events that occur during the day and during twilight hours (6pm-9pm) that give city workers a reason to stay and spend money in the city, will both be strongly considered.

SUPPORTING APPLICATION DOCUMENTATION

All application forms must include the following.



Event marketing and communications plan

Event marketing is how you plan to promote and advertise your event to a wider audience to drive event attendance. Your application must include a copy of your event marketing and communications plan detailing:

- Specific plans for your free programming components;
- How your event will hero Melbourne as a destination of choice; and
- How your event will create international, national, state or local exposure.



Visitation Data

It is an expectation that all events sponsored through the program commit to driving visitation to City of Melbourne. As part of the application for funding, you will be required to supply data on the events expected visitation and spend.



Economic Impact Report (Tier 1 and Tier 2 only)

City of Melbourne values events that contribute significant economic impact to the municipality of Melbourne by enticing audiences that contribute to the local economy into the city. If your organisation does not have a recent Economic Impact Report, you will need to outline how this will be reported.



Market research

Market research is the gathering of information and data from event attendees. It can provide statistical support to validate your planned target audience(s), target areas of improvement and can also be valuable for sponsors. Details on how past market research has been utilised for these purposes, and information about how the event will conduct market research in future events will be highly regarded.



Event permit and site hire fees

If you intend on using any outdoor public open space managed by City of Melbourne, you need to submit an event permit application [online](#). A minimum of 6 weeks' notice will be required to process an application. Fees may be applicable for an event permit regardless of the outcome of this application. For information about an outdoor space, view the City of Melbourne [interactive map](#), contact the Event Operations Team on (03) 9658 9658, or via email at events@melbourne.vic.gov.au.

A quote for site hire fees does not constitute as an event permit. You must continue to work with the Event Operations Team to submit necessary documentation required to obtain an event permit.

Event permits ensure public safety and amenity in public spaces and assist in the sustainable management of our parks and gardens. For further information, go to the [event permits page](#) on the City of Melbourne website.

Follow the steps outlined below to apply for an event permit:

- Submit an [online event permit application](#) and indicate that you are applying to the Event Partnership Program.
- If you do not receive a quote for site hire fees within 10 days - email events@melbourne.vic.gov.au or call (03) 9658 9658 to speak with a member of the Event Operations team as you will need to indicate the value as part of your application form.

Council Policy determines that not-for-profit or community organisations automatically receive a waiver for the event permit fees, regardless of program sponsorship.

If you are a commercial entity you are required to pay full event permit fees, and, if your application is successful, these fees may be waived as in-kind sponsorship if included in your application request.

PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

<h2>Apply</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preview the Event Partnership Program application form through SmartyGrants from March 2024. • Apply for an Event Permit from March 2024. • Apply for Event Partnership Program through SmartyGrants in May 2024. <p><i>Refer to 'Key dates' on the Event Partnership Program website for exact dates.</i></p>
<h2>Assessment</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June - July 2024 - Applications will be assessed in a competitive round, against all other applicants, by a panel of assessors. • The program receives more applications than it can support, so outcomes are determined on the following basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The application's ability to meet the assessment criteria. - The ability to demonstrate adherence to the criteria and partnership benefits as per the relevant Partnership Tier. - The merit of the event concept and whether it adds value to the annual calendar of events based on uniqueness, timing, location and audience. - For returning events, the level of new free programming and / or increased benefits to community sectors. - The amount of sponsorship requested, and the total request for sponsorship by all events within the application round.
<h2>Council Decision</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • August 2024 - Recommendations are put forward at a formal Council meeting for consideration and approval.
<h2>Outcome</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • September 2024 - Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application.
<h2>Agreement</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful applicants will be required to enter into a written sponsorship agreement with City of Melbourne which includes terms and conditions, benefits and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). • The maximum term of each agreement is three years. If applying for a multi-year partnership, the application should present a compelling rationale as to how this will support the event's strategic direction and reciprocated outcomes. • The funding decision made by Council is final and is contingent upon the delivery of the event programming outlined within the application submitted. In the event there are significant changes to the event scope and programming, the funding amount may be reviewed. • You will be allocated a partnership account manager who will begin discussions with you a minimum of three months prior to the event.
<h2>Payment</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful applicants will also be required to accept City of Melbourne's standard payment schedule, which is 50% of any cash sponsorship paid prior to the delivery of the event, with the balance payable on submission of a post-event report. • At the discretion of City of Melbourne, additional conditions may be placed on your sponsorship with accompanying adjustments to the standard payment schedule.
<h2>Benefits</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sponsorship benefits to be delivered as per the agreement.
<h2>Post-event reporting</h2>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All sponsored events are required to submit a post-event report which includes financial statements and / or invoices at the conclusion of the event. • If a sponsored event fails to submit an adequate post-event report to the satisfaction of City of Melbourne or fails to deliver each of the KPIs outlined within the sponsorship agreement, then it is at the discretion of the City of Melbourne as to whether the full sponsorship amount will be paid.

APPLICATION ASSISTANCE



Technical assistance

Refer to the [SmartyGrants help guide](#) for technical assistance related to submitting your application. The [SmartyGrants support desk](#) is open during business hours on 03 9320 6888 or by email service@smartygrants.com.au.



Event planning guide

City of Melbourne has produced an interactive [Melbourne Event Planning Guide](#). The guide provides an accessible and comprehensive overview of event permitting processes and planning requirements when organising an event within the city's public spaces.

Other grants and sponsorships



Application referral

Applications may be referred to an alternative funding program during the assessment process if the funding program selected by the applicant is not deemed the most appropriate for the nature and scale of the event / festival proposed.

Alternative funding programs that may be suitable for referral include:

- [Annual Arts Grants](#)
- [Arts and Creative Investment Partnerships](#)
- [Business Event Sponsorship Program](#)
- [Connected Inclusion Grants](#)

Child Safe Standards

The City of Melbourne is committed to being a [child safe](#) organisation and has zero tolerance for child abuse. The focus of our work is on children under the age of 18. The Council recognises our legal and moral responsibilities in keeping children and young people safe from harm and promoting their best interests. The Council is committed to creating environments where all children have a voice



Interpreter and translation Services

If you need an interpreter when calling the City of Melbourne, please call the following relevant translation services:

If you are deaf, hearing-impaired, or speech-impaired, please call us via the [National Relay Service](#):

- Teletypewriter (TTY) users phone 133 677 then ask for 03 9658 9658
- Speak and Listen users phone 1300 555 727 then ask for 03 9658 9658
- Our multilingual information telephone service offers assistance to people from a non-English speaking background. Visit [Translation services](#).



Alternative funding programs

Events that are not eligible for support via the Event Partnership Program may wish to review City of Melbourne's alternative programs of support.

More information can be found on our [grants and sponsorship page](#).

Please note this program does not fund events or festivals (including components thereof) that are already receiving support from other City of Melbourne programs.

and are listened to, their views are respected and they contribute to how we plan for, design and develop services and activities. The Council expects all staff, volunteers, contractors and funded recipient organisations to observe child safe principles and expectations for appropriate behaviour towards and in the company of children and young people.